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## Censorship and the Challenges of Library Services Delivery in Nigeria

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**CENSORSHIP AND THE CHALLENGES OF LIBRARY SERVICES DELIVERY IN  
NIGERIA**

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# **CENSORSHIP AND THE CHALLENGES OF LIBRARY SERVICES DELIVERY IN NIGERIA**

## **Abstract**

*This paper discusses censorship and the challenges of Library services delivery in Nigeria. Librarians, through their professional associations, have long been committed to the social justice principle of free access to information. External censorship challenges to library collections threaten this principle overtly. However, censorship can also occur in libraries in various covert and often unconscious ways. This paper also raises concerns about current librarian practices and library censorship processes which can effectively censor library collections from within. In managing the library and its services, the librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions. It concludes by calling librarians to provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user.*

**Key Words:** *Censorship, Library, Service Delivery, Intellectual Freedom, Library collection*

## **Introduction**

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as cited by IFLA (2011) states:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

The concept of intellectual freedom involves protecting the rights of all individuals to pursue the types of information they want and to read anything that interests them. Attempts by a member of the community to remove materials from a library collection or to restrict access to them may be the most common challenges to intellectual freedom that a small library will face.

The origins of intellectual freedom can be traced back to Socrates – that famous philosopher, who believed in the value and benefits of free discussion. The American Library

Association (ALA) has been interested in intellectual freedom for a long time, with the first Library Bill of Rights written in 1939. The Library Bill of Rights has been modified several times over the years with the most recent version available from the ALA web site. While the Library Bill of Rights does not provide legal protection (legal protection comes from the First Amendment), it does provide a set of principles to guide libraries and librarians in dealing with issues of censorship and intellectual freedom. For a variety of resources related to intellectual freedom, such as information on how to deal with community concerns over library materials and the role of librarians in intellectual freedom and the Internet (Washington Library Media Association, 2013).

Intellectual freedom advocates oppose censorship, which places "... restrictive controls on the dissemination of ideas, information, or images transmitted through any communication medium." (American Library Association's *World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services*). Censorship of ideas and information has been practiced in various forms throughout history, starting with the earliest civilizations. Today, censorship is practiced in many ways, both obvious and subtle.

### **Conceptual meaning of censorship**

Censorship is seen as the control of the information and ideas circulated within a society. Reichman (1988) as cited by Famous (2011) sees censorship as "the removal, suppression or restricted circulation of literary, artistic or educational materials on the grounds that they are morally or otherwise objectionable in the light of standards applied by the censor". Yet, as he points out, "virtually any decision made by school board members opposing what is taught, used and learned in school can be viewed as censorship". It could also be seen as the examination of books, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other forms of communication for the purpose of altering or suppressing ideas found to be objectionable, harmful, or offensive. Censorship can be prior or post (Famous, 2011).

**Prior censorship.** This is when an information material is being banned or censored before publication. This may be done by publishers, government and its agencies, organizations, individuals, religious or other associations, etc. and may be done by force or negotiations.

**Post censorship.** This is when an information material is banned or censored after it has been published. Some good examples are the banning of Tell magazine publications during the military regime of General Sanni Abacha and the banning of **Satanic Verses** novel in 1989 written by Salman Rushdie; in which a global death sentence was placed on the author by the late spiritual leader of Iran Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini but in 1998, the succeeding government of Iran under the leadership of Mohammad Khatami lifted the death sentence.

Also, in the view of Lau (2009) censorship can occur “anytime a book or other library material is removed from its intended audience”. Libraries often face challenges from patrons who desire to have material they find offensive removed from the collection. 139 challenges to materials were reported in Canadian libraries in 2009 (Schrader, 2010), and 348 challenges to materials were reported in US libraries in 2010 (ALA, 2012). It could be pointed out here that, censorship is not the same thing as weeding. Weeding takes place in the library when some obsolete and old edition of library materials are being removed from the library collection and at the same time replaced with the current edition of such material in the library collection.

Likewise, Moody (2005) defines censorship as those actions which significantly restrict free access to information. Some forms of censorship are so unconscious that even the individuals perpetrating them have no idea that they are in fact censoring. Still other forms are systemic and can only be mitigated via deliberate librarian actions. It is these, more subtle forms of censorship in the library context that this paper aims to explore.

According to Famous (2011), censorship and the ideology supporting it could be traced back to ancient times, and to the fact that every society has customs, taboos, or laws by which speech, dress, religious observance, and sexual expression are regulated. In Athens for instance, where democracy first emerged, censorship was well known as a means of enforcing the prevailing orthodoxy (orthodoxy means a generally accepted way of life). Indeed, Plato was the first recorded thinker to formulate a rationale for intellectual, religious, and artistic censorship. In his ideal state outlined in “The Republic”, official censors would prohibit mothers and nurses from relating tales deemed bad or evil. Plato also proposed that unorthodox notions about God or the hereafter be treated as crimes and that formal procedures be established to suppress heresy. Freedom of speech in Ancient Rome was reserved for those in positions of authority.

## **Cases of censorship in Nigeria**

Ironically, censorship had been practiced and is being practiced by many countries in the world today, both in the developed and developing countries. It cuts across the democratic and military system of government of some countries like: United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, France, China, South Africa, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and in Nigeria which the major focus of this paper.

Moreover, in Nigeria the purpose of censorship has varied, with some censors targeting material deemed to be indecent or obscene; heretical or blasphemous; or seditious or treasonous. Thus, ideas have been suppressed under the guise of protecting three basic social institutions: the family, the church, and the Nigerian governments.

### **Protection of religious beliefs in Nigeria**

The organized church soon joined the Nigerian government as an active censor. The Biblical injunction, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain" is clearly an early attempt to set limits on what would be acceptable theological discourse. Likewise, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" is an attempt to set limits on how the Divine may or may not be represented. (And no one, in any land, should think this is anachronistic. Across the world today, appeals to divinity are common reasons for banning the dissemination of a broad range of materials). In Nigeria, censorship is no more acceptable for being practiced in the name of religion than for national security, as protecting the church is protecting the state because the government is comprised of the church members.

### **Protection of the State**

Nigerian national security and defense runs a very close to the religious impulse as a rationale for suppression of information. While nowhere near as old as the religious impulse to censor, in its more modern form it has been even more pervasive. And while the influence of religion on secular affairs is muted in Nigeria, the influence of governments usually is not. It is difficult to think of any government that would forego the power, in perceived extreme circumstances, to censor all media, not simply those that appear online. The question, asked in a real world scenario, is what could be considered extreme enough circumstances to justify such action? In the Nigerian context, governments have used a powerful array of techniques and arguments to marshal support for their censorship efforts. One of the earliest, as noted, is the religious argument. Certain things are deemed to be offensive in the eyes of the Deity. These things vary

from country to country, religion to religion, even sect to sect. They are mostly, though not always, sexual in nature. The commentaries on the nature of the impulse to be censorious towards sexual expression are too numerous even for a wide ranging project like this. The curious reader is urged to read far and wide in the classic texts to see that the problem of Nigerian governments and her citizens reacting in this way is not a new one. What's new is the potential global consequence (Famous, 2011).

During the military regimes in Nigeria, a lot of media houses were closed down, many journalists were arrested by state security officials, clamped into detention and most of these media men were killed. Because some government officials were offended with their publications, hence, they were severely dealt with. For instance, the case of **Dele Giwa** who was killed by a letter bomb delivered to him by the state security agents (though this had been denied by the suspected security officials) but it has resulted into several unconcluded litigations. Also, many human right crusaders were also detained in some harsh condition which led to the untimely death of some of them, for example late **Chief Gani Fawehinmi** who developed terminal disease after his several detentions at Gasua, kuje and other prisons across the country by the military regimes in Nigeria; this eventually led to his demise in the early hours of 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 after a prolonged battle with lung cancer aged 71 years..

### **Protection of the family**

In Nigeria, parental claims certainly have a place in the dialogue, but they can cut across meaningful lines of discourse as well. Despite the presence of a widespread and deadly worldwide epidemic Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), there are parents who object to the teaching of safe sex models in Nigerian public schools. Such objections pose an obvious problem: do their rights as the parents of their own children supersede the rights of all children in a classroom (or library, or online community) to have access to information that could save their lives? In Nigeria, the legal precedents, which usually provide clear guidelines in such matters, are mixed here. Courts have ordered operations and vaccinations in the public health interest, but courts have also ruled that religious beliefs are a compelling answer to public concerns. The question is not whether there are legitimate parental claims, but rather at what point is there a public interest that overrides them? Is it only in matters of imminent and life threatening danger or does it extend beyond that clearly delineated realm?

However, in the Nigerian society, the following types of censorship are common:

- ✚ **Moral censorship:** This is the banning of materials because they are morally objectionable to the various/some of the cultural norms in the Nigerian society, knowing that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society, having numerous sets of norms and values.
- ✚ **Military censorship:** In Nigeria, this is the banning of information materials that tend to expose military tactics and national information; for security reasons. The publications of some media houses especially that of Newswatch, Tell Magazine and The News Magazine were censored on several occasions by the military regimes at that time.
- ✚ **Political censorship:** This occurs when the Nigerian government needs to keep secrets from its civilians in order to prevent disruption. Though democracy does not support this, yet in some circumstance, it is necessary for the saving of the state, calling to mind that Nigeria has always had the tendency of splitting.
- ✚ **Religious censorship:** In Nigeria, two major religions dominate: Christianity and Islam. Religious censorship is therefore the banning of materials because they are religiously questionable. For example the case of '**Boko Haram**' decedents in the Northern part of Nigeria that censored anything Christianity and Western education publications.
- ✚ **Corporate censorship:** Corporations can ban (by negotiation, unless it has monopoly) materials unfitting to them or their partners. In Nigeria, this kind of censorship is very rare as there are no many corporations with monopoly. Many of the public corporations are yet under government control. Hence the only monopoly is the government, but fortunately to say, it is democracy.

## Sources of censorship

There is no single source of censorship, with forms of censorship found at various levels in society. These include: government, local communities, and individual librarians can all be considered to practice censorship in various ways.



### **Censorship by Government.**

Government is the major producer and user of information; it generates large volume of information daily for its operations. Yet, it plays a major part in suppressing information from circulating to the populace. This she does by introducing some draconian principles to suppress information from reaching the entire populace. Censorship exists to some extent in all modern countries, both in the developed and developing countries like: USA, UK, France, Japan, Singapore, Australia, Egypt, South Africa (especially during the apartheid system of government) and in Nigeria (especially during the military regimes) when some media houses were shut down. However, it is worse in some countries than in others. A government which censors the information available to its people, other than in a state of national emergency (e.g., a sudden attack by a hostile military force) is a government which seeks to keep the people in a state of ignorance, and should not complain if the people have no loyalty to it. Government censorship influences our legal definitions and interpretations of the issue.

### **Censorship at the local level**

Threats to community standards are often cited in issues of censorship. Identifying those standards may be difficult for the librarian, especially in a community with a diverse population that has a range of needs and interests. Local religious groups, “concerned citizens” or a school board may object to certain materials and attempt to censor them. There are many Internet sites that identify the most commonly banned books due to community disapproval.

### **Censorship by librarians**

Censorship in libraries has always been a topic of concern: “the relationship between librarians and censorship is, and has been, a troubled one” (Oppenheim & Smith, 2004). Some forms of censorship are not often discussed outside the library world: self-censorship and selection as censorship. Self-censorship occurs when a librarian deliberately avoids selecting materials that might cause controversy in the community, or materials with which they personally disagree. A collection development policy that specifically aims for a balance of views can help the librarian make selection decisions without self-censoring. In some cases of self-censorship, the librarian does not make information available to the community based on his or her own judgment of the

materials. It should be noted here that librarian being an information provider, are not expected to censor any information, whether such information is against his/her belief and personal interest or not. He/she must acquire and processed all the informational resources equally. As librarians we are to treat and serve all our clienteles equally knowing that different people visit library for one piece of information or the other and we must not deny them.

However, at some level, the librarian must always judge materials in order to choose the highest quality and most reliable sources. Based on this decision process, some people argue that librarians routinely perform a type of censorship by selecting one information resource over another for inclusion in the collection. Ultimately, each librarian is responsible for following the collection development policies at his or her library and for monitoring his or her own actions to avoid placing intellectual freedom and the First Amendment at risk. Blomsberg (2011) opines that censorship is a very slippery slope and even one small allowance can often result in widespread control of information in totally unforeseen ways. Remember that you are entitled to your own personal opinions and preferences but you (and the library) are not entitled to imposing those opinions and preferences on others. The library as an institution is in the business of providing information in as neutral an environment as possible.

Blomsberg (2011) further states that books in the library should not be thrown out, rejected or censored because of the content or beliefs of the author, publisher or librarian. He further states that-“***Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development...*** “.This statement applies to all the resources in the library. A librarian cannot remove a book or decide not to order a book because it disagrees with their moral beliefs. Allowing information that goes against one’s personal beliefs can be a very hard spot to be in, but it is part of upholding the Library Bill of Rights and providing that equal access to a variety of opinions to everyone. Going against that is censorship. The Freedom to Read allows us to choose to read what we would like regardless of what the writing says. This freedom has been stretched with the internet and the variety of blogs, websites, and other electronic resources.

Possibly the most insidious form of censorship is the self censorship of librarians. Even librarians who consciously do not agree with censorship of library collections may in fact censor subconsciously or even consciously when potential personal threats are perceived, such as conflict in the workplace or community (Evans, 2000). If individuals are conscious of their own

personal values and prejudices, they may be able to minimize the censorial influence of these biases on their professional role (Lee, 1998). However, if the librarian is unaware of their own biases, self-censorship decisions can often be justified via claims of ‘inaccuracy’ or misguided concerns about ‘balance’ (Moody, 2004).

### **LIBRARY: Service Delivery Institution**

The major reason for setting up library in any society is for service delivery. Librarians and information scientists are imbued to serve people through the provision of access to quality information resources in either print or electronic formats through which people’s standard of living are improved, dreams are actualized, education is sustained, sound decisions are made and executed, freedom of expression is enhanced and information resources are preserved for posterity. The proliferation of information in different formats and the attendant complexity in retrieval processes have promoted and sustained the need for society to share resources, works, ideas and information. This provides the rationale for library and information practice. The belief in the need for human beings to share information and ideas implies the recognition of information rights as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 19 previously stated in this work.

The Library as an institution exists for the benefit of a given constituency, whether it is the citizens of a community, members of an educational institution or some larger or more specialized group. Those who enter the library profession assume an obligation to maintain ethical standards of behaviour in relation to the governing authority under which they work, to the library constituency, to the library as an institution, to fellow workers, to colleagues and to society in general. IFLA (2011) posits that the core mission of library and information professionals is to facilitate access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy. Librarians do not encourage censorship, denial and restriction of information to anybody by any person or groups of persons and use the most efficient and effective methods and standards to serve their clientele. As a matter of fact, Librarians must resist the censorship of library materials by individuals and groups through peaceful dialogue.

Besides, the librarian, conscious of the global context in which he operates, undertakes to

promote, both individually and in cooperation, the integration of information systems and the removal of the organizational and geographical obstacles which hinder the circulation of information and documents. A librarian should collect, organize, preserve and proffer library materials on the basis of professional knowledge and judgment. He should not yield to pressure or attempts at censorship of any kind. Also, the librarian, in relating with the publisher, should shun all forms of partiality in making decisions based on selecting publishers/suppliers of goods to the library. The librarian should not consider ethnic, religion and other affiliations in awarding contract. Librarians should shun all forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, sex, age and religion in their daily discharge of duties, cooperation and decision making. (IFLA, 2011). Information supplied by the librarian should be versatile, complete, objective and impartial. The librarian should reject and oppose any form of censorship of the documents gathered and organized as well as the information supplied. He must encourage the free flow of information and ideas without discrimination.

ALIA (2001) asserts that 'Freedom can be protected in a democratic society only if its citizens have unrestricted access to information and ideas.' Consequently, this principle is supported by seven specific responsibilities for libraries to uphold:

- Asserting the equal and equitable rights of citizens to information regardless of age, race, gender, religion, disability, cultural identity, language, socioeconomic status, lifestyle choice, political allegiance or social viewpoint;
- Adopting an inclusive approach in developing and implementing policies regarding access to information and ideas that are relevant to the library and information service concerned, irrespective of the controversial nature of the information or ideas;
- Ensuring that their clients have access to information from a variety of sources and agencies to meet their needs and that a citizen's information needs are met independently of location and an ability to pay;
- Catering for interest in contemporary issues without promoting or suppressing particular beliefs and ideas;
- Protecting the confidential relationships that exist between the library and information service and its clients;
- Resisting attempts by individuals or groups within their communities to restrict access to information and ideas while at the same time recognizing that powers of censorship are

legally vested in state and federal governments;

- Observing laws and regulations governing access to information and ideas but working towards the amendment of those laws and regulations which inhibit library and information services in meeting the obligations and responsibilities outlined in this Statement.’ (ALIA, 2001)

## **Development of Libraries in Nigeria**

Alokun (2003) posits that libraries began as collections and repositories of letters, documents and bills. The need to keep accurate records of these materials for consultation and prosperity gave rise to what is today known as libraries. In order to develop libraries certain factors must be present. Morka (1992) states the following developmental factors for the establishment of libraries in any society:

- ✓ There must be relative peace.
- ✓ There must be a literate community that can read and write.
- ✓ Availability of writing materials.
- ✓ Surplus wealth that is, an economy above subsistence level.
- ✓ There must be a high level of commercial activities including foreign trade.
- ✓ The existence of a prosperous, rich and affluent community.

The development of libraries has always been influenced by the above factors in the sense that whenever there is peace, life and prosperity would be secured and people can go about their normal business, acquire wealth, have time for leisure and reading. When this happens, they would keep records of their transactions. By so doing library will emerge.

Lagos library was established in 1932 as public library. Henry Carr established private library, which had about 18,000 volumes. After his death in 1945, the library was acquired and the materials were used to establish the University College (now The University of Ibadan) library at Ibadan in 1948 with John Harris as the first University Librarian. With this, a new course in the development of library services in Nigeria began (Alokun, 2003).

The British Council library was established in Lagos in Ibadan, Enugu, Kaduna and Kano. This development was the first attempt to bring library services into the interior of the country. The Lagos Town Council assumed full responsibility for the provision of public library services in 1950. In 1952, the Northern Regional Library Service became functional

as a division of the Ministry of Education in Kaduna. Three years later, the Eastern Regional Library Board law was enacted. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced mobile library that was quite successful at that time. In the West, Library Board was also created that has responsibility for all matters relating to library development. A National Library for Nigerians was established in 1964. With the creation of additional states that were begun in 1967, more public libraries were established in the country.

Private individuals were not left out in the development of libraries in Nigeria. They include Tom Jones who donated part of his estate Will to establish a library in Lagos. Herbert Macaulay had rich collections, which the government acquired and used for the library development, Chief Obafemi Awolowo had private library over 8,000 volumes, which he willed to Ogun State University (now Olabisi Onabanjo University), Ago-Iwoye, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe acquired substantial collection of books and newspapers in his private library called Herbert See las Macaulay, Dr J.A. Shanu has a private collection of over 10,000 volumes. Others were Sir Akanu Ibiam, Dr Wachukwu and Sir Charles Ore.


Many special (Research) libraries were established before and after independence. These special libraries include: the Central Medical Research Library, Lagos founded in 1948, the Rubber Research Institute Library, Maiduguri, the National Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research Library, Lagos, the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture at Ibadan (IITA) library to mention a few.


Media houses like the Daily Times of Nigeria, Tribune, Punch, Newswatch Communications, and the Guardian Newspapers established libraries. Banks and oil companies were not left out. They equally established libraries to cater for information needs of their staff and customers.

One can rightly say that libraries can be found all over the country. Regrettably, most of these libraries do not worth being called libraries especially public and school libraries. Only very few libraries in Nigeria today can afford to buy daily newspapers on regular basis, purchase current books and journals due to insufficient fund. One would like to see the situation where Nigerian libraries are of international standards with up to date collections, well-trained library personnel, decent building, and full computerization of library services.


## General library services


The library in a community provides a unique service that should be accessible to everybody. The provision of library and information services should be one of the fundamental human rights of every citizen. It is a store, which stocks all kinds of knowledge and information carriers that are meant to be consulted and used by readers with little or no expense on their part (Aina, 2004). The services provided to users of individual libraries depend on the objectives of the parent organization. The services provided in a library will differ from one library to another but there are certain services that are common to all libraries. These services according to Aina (2004) could be categorized as follows:

 **Lending services.** This is perhaps the most important service provided by a library. It is essentially a social service in which users of a library have the privilege of borrowing library materials either for reading or consultation. Apart from books, other resources in the library that can be loaned out include such materials as audiocassettes, slides, videotapes, films, projectors, cassettes and video-machines. To promote equal and fair access to library holdings, lending out library materials is considered to be very fundamental. However, in borrowing library materials, certain processes have to be followed. The records of transactions of the materials to be borrowed must be documented or charged, that is the records must be kept in the library and the library material checked out. It is important to keep a proper record of the borrower in order to be able to trace the borrower if the book/library material is not returned when due. Aina (2004) posits that loan periods vary from one library to the other, and even within a library setting, members of a library community may have different loan periods.

 **Inter-Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery Service.** This involves, essentially, transactions between two or more libraries. A library which does not have a particular library material desired by one of its clienteles will borrow the material requested from another library on behalf of the clientele who needs the materials. Generally, the lending library provides substitutes of the original materials, especially journal articles. However, not all materials can be loaned out to libraries through inter library loans. For example, reference sources, rare books, fragile materials, periodicals, audiovisual materials,

dissertations and theses are not normally loaned out. ILL is very important where the resources of a library are limited because the library will ensure that only important and affordable materials are purchased while the rest are made available to readers through ILL. Once ILL is running well, access to a large number of documents is guaranteed.

 **Reservation Service.** Reservation of library materials is very common in academic and school libraries. There are some documents that merit being reserved for use only in the library because clients heavily use them or they are high-risk books that could be stolen or mutilated if they are kept on the open shelves. Such materials cannot be lent out like other books; hence they are removed from the open stacks. In such a situation, such documents are kept in a restricted area where they could be loaned out for a limited period. Books that are kept in the reserve section can only be used within the library for a certain period, which could be for two hours or more. In some cases, readers may be allowed to take the out overnight and it must be returned the following day immediately the library opens. One of the advantages of a reserve collection is that if it is found that some documents are very popular, the library could decide to purchase multiple copies of such books. However, two main problems with reserve collections are that sometimes, the waiting time may be too long for popular books, as well as the fact that the materials are kept in closed stack, which users cannot browse through. The circulation section of a library is responsible for this service.


 **Provision of seating and study facilities.** The library is normally expected to provide seating facilities for its readers so that they can consult and read books of interest to them, hence the need to provide a suitable space environment. For this, libraries do provide seats and reading tables for readers who intend to use the library for research or any serious academic activity, academic and large public libraries provide study carrels. These are single study facilities for one or two people. The carrels are generally in a secluded place far from the general reading area. They could be separate single rooms or cubicles. Any reader wishing to make use of a carrel must request for it in writing before use. Besides, libraries provide equipment and other facilities necessary for viewing and listening to audiovisual materials.





✚ **Reference services.** The provision of reference is an important function of a library. Readers are provided this service on request. It should be noted that people have different reference queries that need to be solved by the librarian. Hence, it is generally a person-to-person service. In many cases, reference processes involve interviewing the reader to enable the reference librarian to articulate the problem of the user clearly. The reference librarian then prepares a search strategy by translating the reference queries into the language of the system used in preparing the library catalogue. The result of the interview will enable the reference librarian to determine what sources in the library to use in order to provide answers to the queries. Different types of reference services include: directional, ready/quick reference questions, search questions, research questions, vertical files, statistics, reference interview and search strategy.

✚ **Current Awareness Service (CAS).** This service helps to keep users up to date with the happenings in their subject areas of interest. It is to ensure that users are aware of recent developments in their fields of interest; hence users are informed of latest documents available to the library or information obtainable elsewhere. The information can be made available to the users through telephone calls, e-mail messages, letters, preprints of papers, photocopy of table of contents, periodicals routings, maintenance of card files of references, library bulletins, subscription to specialized services, electronic news groups, etc. Also, back covers of a selection of recent acquisitions could be displayed. It could be noted that CAS is always provided to users in broad subject categories without necessarily targeting a particular user. Thus, CAS is not a personalized service. Information is usually provided on a variety of documents like journals, books, conference proceedings, theses and dissertations, newspapers and magazines.

✚ **Exhibition and displays.** This service is essentially to advertise the services and resources of a library. A display draws the attention of library users to the services rendered by the library. It publicises the services through illustrative materials on display stands, display boards, etc. Exhibition on the other hand, is generally to stimulate readers' interest on a particular area of interest to the community. For example, library materials on a particular topic that might be of interest to the public could be exhibited.

 **Library publications.** It is usual for a library to issue out publications to guide users in the use of library facilities and resources. Some of the publications include the library guide. This publication provides detailed and accurate information about the library. It is always written in simple language with minimum librarianship terminologies. Usually, library guides are well illustrated with coloured photographs, especially of some landmark areas in the library. It contains the physical and postal addresses of the library, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail and web site addresses. Also, the guide contains the procedures for registration, opening hours and other library facilities available to facilitate effective library use.

 **User education.** The library provides user education in order to equip a user with enough knowledge on the use of the library. This will enable the user to use the library resources effectively and efficiently. Through user education, the user is able to get any information he/she desires as well as developing the skills to use the resources of the library independently. The following are the various methods of imparting the skill on the use of a library: it could be one-to-one sessions, library orientation/tours or classroom instruction.

 **Information literacy programme.** This is a more holistic programme of user education. Many large libraries, especially university and research libraries, emphasize the need for users to acquire skills that will enable them search for information independently on any aspect of knowledge using both traditional and electronic methods of accessing information. Information literacy programme is geared towards attaining a competence in the use of library and computer networks/technologies.

Apart from the above general library services, there are also specialized services that are peculiar to some types of libraries. Such services include:

- Literature search service
- Selective dissemination of information (SDI)
- Retrieval services
- Translation service
- Extension and outreach services
- Rental of library premises for public usage.

## Censorship in libraries

Mills (2012) asserts that all libraries have the mandate to support intellectual freedom; but Librarians can often be tempted to censor by selection. Books can be rejected based on: budget, lack of demand, literary quality, limited shelf space, content, relevance to the community, fear of a challenge and poor reviews. It is difficult to know when these criteria are used as legitimate selection tools or as an “excuse for self-censorship”. Nevertheless, some libraries censored their resources due the official challenge policy which usually affects the collections of such libraries. A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those materials. (ALA, 2012).

However, the following are the censorship processes that usually take place in the libraries:

- Library user discovers material in the library that they find objectionable.
- The user alerts library staff about the materials and often assumes staff are not aware of the material and will agree with them to remove it
- Materials are seldom removed through this process because materials have already met selection policy standards. Materials are usually removed for political purposes.
- After discovering the library does not intend to remove it, patron seeks more official routes: Filling out a Challenge Form, writing a letter of challenge to the library director/administration and speaking at a Library Board Meeting.
- The complainer may go through unofficial Routes: Contacting the local media, organizing an ad hoc protesting group, staging a peaceful protest and outright theft or destruction of the material from the library circulation.
- Library will consider complaint and review material in question.
- Materials will be compared to Materials Selection Policy i.e. Guidelines by which libraries choose materials for their collection.

However, in order to solve the problems of censorship in the library, Curry (1997) grouped the actions that can be taken as follows:

- ✓ Relocating material within the library or the library system (e.g. moving to a branch library)
- ✓ Discarding material, particularly that which is in paperback format
- ✓ Locating sensitive material in a reserve or restricted section immediately after

purchase

- ✓ Gathering positive reviews in anticipation of a challenge
- ✓ Encouraging staff to offer verbal cautions to patrons
- ✓ Labeling the material or its catalogue record.

## **Handling challenges of censorship in library collections**

In the unfortunate circumstance that library is confronted with a challenge to an item in the collection, there are many things that you can do. The online version of Intellectual Freedom Manual for Arizona Libraries outlines procedures that you should follow. Other state library associations, as well as the American Library Association (2012), provide extensive practical information about handling challenges. It contains extensive information to help you develop appropriate policies, handle challenges, and operate the library in accordance with First Amendment Rights. One of the most important things to remember is to be prepared. Do not wait until you are faced with a challenge to devise a strategy! Plan ahead, have guidelines in place, and make sure everyone who works in the library understands these procedures. Library boards and school officials should be reminded of the procedures and policies regarding Intellectual Freedom at least once a year.

### **1. Keep your policies and procedures current.**

This is especially important considering the popularity of the Internet. Monitor news and developments in ALA, especially any changes to the Library Bill of Rights, or the Freedom to Read Statement regarding labeling and electronic access. Most state library associations cite the above mentioned documents as the essential elements for a local library's policy. The American Library Association's Freedom to Read Foundation is dedicated to helping libraries and librarians preserve the right of ordinary citizens to read, and therefore think, as they wish without censorship or coercion from others. The library policy has to be reviewed from time to time in order to keep it relevant with the overall policies of the parent institution.

### **2. Have a formal policy to handle complaints.**

Complaints should be written down and then submitted to a review process. It is a good idea to develop a standardized form that requires the patron to answer questions about the material and

why they object to it. You can find many examples of complaint forms on library websites. Here are some examples of questions to ask on a complaint form:

- What do you object to and what are the specific page numbers (or other identifying information for location) of the offensive content?
- For what age group do you think this material is appropriate?
- Did you read/view/listen to the whole work? If not, which parts did you read/view/listen to?
- What do you consider the effects of reading/viewing/listening to this material?
- What about it is good?
- What is the theme?
- What do literary and/or film critics think about the work?
- What action should the library take? Should the library withdraw the work from the collection or move it to another location in the collection?
- What source would you recommend to replace this item or to provide another view of the same topic?

### **3. Have open lines of communication with local community leaders.**

If the community leaders are familiar with your library's collection goals and collection development policy, they will be more understanding when materials in your collection are challenged. You should make sure your local leaders understand that the Library Bill of Rights stems from the First Amendment. Build coalitions with businesses and others who are also supporters of intellectual freedom. These usually include local newspapers and other media along with bookstores.

### **4. Communicate the library's position on intellectual freedom to the public.**

By explaining what intellectual freedom means (that it is a broad set of principles intended to guard against censorship), you may gain more community support. It might be a good idea to post the library's own version of the Library Bill of Rights in the library or make it available in a pamphlet.

## **5. Treatment of Local, Historic, or Rare Materials**

Gift items that might deserve special attention include books by local authors, local photographs of historical interest (if the subjects or places are not identified, perhaps some long-time residents might be able to lend a hand), yearbooks from local schools, local newspapers of historical importance, and local memorabilia. The section of this site concerning the selection of materials for Special Collections will provide further guidance in this area.

Keep in mind that old photographs may need special (possibly expensive) treatment to prevent them from deteriorating; color photocopies on acid-free paper may be a good option. Likewise, old newspapers and scrapbooks of newspaper clippings should probably be photocopied, laminated (in multiple pieces, if necessary) and/or microfilmed before they become useless. See the Preservation section of this site for more information.

## **6. Internet Use Policies**

Information available over the Internet is unregulated, varies widely in quality, and contains many sites that are sexually explicit or are otherwise unsuitable (especially for children). Given this, should there be restrictions placed on Internet access?

The American Library Association (2012) believes that individuals have the right to make their own decisions about what information is appropriate for them and that access to information, including electronic information, should not be restricted. As noted above, ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom provides extensive information about intellectual freedom issues including those related to Internet use in libraries, filtering, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), elements for an Internet use policy and other topics of concern to libraries of all types.

Filtering software, although greatly improved since first introduced, still basically blocks sites from the computer upon which it is being used. Filtering software blocks sexually explicit and other offensive material by applying a ratings system or searching web sites for specific keywords that are deemed inappropriate. The problem with filtering software is that some sites are blocked that contain valuable information, and other sites are not blocked that ought to be.

Given these concerns, it is essential that every library develop an Internet Use Policy to state the library's position on who has access to the Internet and what kinds of materials can be accessed. Many libraries, especially school libraries, have adopted what are known as Acceptable Use Policies (AUP). An Acceptable Use Policy is usually a written agreement that outlines permissible uses of the Internet, rules for online behavior, and access privileges. Such policies often include an explanation of the Internet and how it will be accessed, an outline of the patron's responsibilities while using the Internet in the library, and a statement that lets the patron know that using the Internet is a privilege and not a right.

### **What to do when the censor comes**

The following list is based on the steps recommended by the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom in the document - "Dealing with Concerns about Library Resources." These guidelines apply whether the concerns expressed are about book selection or about other resources and services.

**Listen** calmly and courteously to the complaint. Remember that the person has a right to express a concern. Listen fully to the grievance. A patron who is complaining about a particular title, for example, may want only to protest about that title, and may not be asking for its removal from the library.

**Respond** with respect, but also with confidence. The goal is to help this person understand the need for diversity in library collections and the use of library resources. Remember, you represent not only this patron, but also those patrons who want or need to use the material in question. If the complaint refers to a particular title, refer to the library's collection development policy and explain the selection. Your assertiveness and clear support of intellectual freedom could prevent the complaint from going further, once the patron understands that you have strong reasons for keeping the material in the library's collection.

**Notify** the administration and/or the governing authority of the complaint and assure them that the library's procedures are being followed. Present full, written information giving the nature of the complaint and identifying the source.

**Seek the support** of the local media when appropriate. Freedom to read and freedom of

the press go hand in hand. When appropriate,

**Inform** local civic organizations of the facts and enlist their support. Meet negative pressure with positive pressure.

**Assert the principles** of the “Library Bill of Rights” as a professional responsibility. Laws governing obscenity, subversive material and other questionable matter are subject to interpretation by courts. Library resources found to meet the standards set in the materials selection or collection development policy should not be removed or restricted from public access until after an adversary hearing resulting in a final judicial determination.

## CONCLUSION

Censorship is a difficult issue. It is not, however, a librarian’s job to push censorship. Instead, libraries must push for the unobstructed freedom to explore ideas. Parents, on the other hand, can make a push to censor what their children see, hear, or read, but should understand that we solidify our beliefs by exploring opposing viewpoints. Libraries need to continue their push to uphold the Freedom to Read and the First Amendment. Anything going against that is censorship and censorship should not be allowed.

In managing the library and its services, the librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions. The librarian should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user. As information providers, we must resist censorship of any form; we must avoid it as fire. Information is power, everybody in the society needs it for their survival, once it is made available, the users will be on top of their challenges.



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